

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2023

A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- MULTILINGUAL EDUCATORS INVESTMENT ACT

Introduced By: Senators Cano, Acosta, Euer, DiMario, Murray, Mack, Quezada, Pearson,  
Gallo, and Burke

Date Introduced: March 07, 2023

Referred To: Senate Finance

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Findings of fact.

2 (1) The demographic divide between teachers and students is of growing public concern.

3 (2) Currently, multilingual students comprise twenty-seven percent (27%) of students in  
4 Rhode Island's urban core student population and sixteen percent (16%) of Rhode Island's  
5 statewide student population (Rhode Island Kids Count, 2022).

6 (3) Only two percent (2%) of multilingual learners are enrolled in dual language  
7 programs and comprise a large portion of urban core and urban ring school students.

8 (5) A common explanation of why the demographic divide is so concerning is that  
9 multilingual students benefit most from instruction from teachers that are certified in dual language  
10 instruction.

11 (6) More students benefiting from dual language instruction may, in turn, translate into  
12 better academic outcomes such as student motivation, improved interest in academics, and grades.

13 (7) Multilingual educators represent excellent role models and provide a continuous source  
14 of inspiration for not only multilingual students, but all students.

15 (8) Linguistic separation and isolation can be countered through significant investment in  
16 multilingual educators that will deliver academic content through multiple languages

17 (9) Students learn important societal lessons through the example of cooperative interracial  
18 and interethnic relationships among teachers.

19 (10) It is in the best interest of the state, its residents, and its students to develop and support

1 certified multilingual educators. The Rhode Island Blueprint for a Multilingual Learner Success  
2 (2021) calls for a nimble system that "Secures and allocates human and fiscal resources to support  
3 high-quality core instruction to meet the diverse needs of MLLs, including professional learning  
4 opportunities for all teachers and administrators."

5 (11) Support for increased preparation and training of bilingual/dual language and world  
6 language teachers can successfully be leveraged by providing direct financial support to Rhode  
7 Island college and the university of Rhode Island working to increase the number of certified  
8 bilingual/dual language and world language teachers.

9 SECTION 2. Title 16 of the General Laws entitled "EDUCATION" is hereby amended by  
10 adding thereto the following chapter:

11 CHAPTER 112

12 MULTILINGUAL EDUCATORS INVESTMENT ACT

13 **16-112-1. Short title.**

14 This chapter shall be known and may be cited as the "Multilingual Educators Investment  
15 Act".

16 **16-112-2. Definitions.**

17 When used in this chapter, the following words and phrases shall have the following  
18 meanings:

19 (1) "FAFSA" means the Free Application for Federal Student Aid form;

20 (2) "Mandatory fees and tuition" means the costs that every student is required to pay in  
21 order to enroll in classes, and does not include room and board, textbooks, program fees that may  
22 exist in some majors, course fees that may exist for some specific courses, meal plans, or travel;

23 (3) "Multilingual educator" means an educator who has demonstrated advanced  
24 proficiency in at least two (2) languages.

25 (i) "Bilingual dual language educator" means a teacher who is certified by the Rhode Island  
26 department of elementary and secondary education to serve in a bilingual or dual language  
27 education classroom.

28 (ii) "World language educator" means a teacher who is certified by the Rhode Island  
29 department of elementary and secondary education to serve in a world language classroom.

30 (4) "Multilingual learner" means a student who speaks a language other than English at  
31 home;

32 (i) "English language learner" is a multilingual learner who is undergoing the process of  
33 becoming proficient in English;

34 (5) "Recipient" or "recipient student" means a student attending Rhode Island college, the

1 university of Rhode Island, or another state approved program that offers certification programs for  
2 world language and/or bilingual dual language who qualifies and is awarded a scholarship pursuant  
3 to the provisions of § 16-112-4.

4 (6) "Scholarship" or "scholarship program" means the scholarship program that is  
5 established pursuant to § 16-112-4 to promote and increase the quality of multilingual teachers in  
6 urban core and urban ring public schools.

7 (7) "State" means the State of Rhode Island.

8 (8) "Urban core" means the municipalities of Providence, Pawtucket, Central Falls,  
9 Woonsocket and Newport.

10 (9) "Urban ring" means the municipalities of Cranston, Warwick, West Warwick, North  
11 Providence and East Providence.

12 **16-112-3. Strategy to expand teaching certifications for bilingual dual language and**  
13 **world language teachers.**

14 The office of the postsecondary commissioner is hereby empowered and directed to  
15 collaborate with the department of elementary and secondary education and in consultation with  
16 Rhode Island college, the university of Rhode Island, and any other state approved program that  
17 prepares teachers for world language and/or bilingual/dual language certification to prioritize,  
18 improve, and expand the program options and available space to result in an increase in the issuance  
19 of teaching certificates to promote and increase the number of bilingual dual language and world  
20 language teachers in urban and urban ring schools.

21 **16-112-4. Scholarship program.**

22 (a) Beginning July 1, 2023, there is hereby established a scholarship program to promote  
23 and increase the number of multilingual educators in urban core and urban ring public schools.

24 (b) The general assembly shall annually appropriate, commencing in fiscal year 2024, the  
25 sum of two million dollars (\$2,000,000) to implement the scholarship purposes of this chapter.  
26 Additional funds beyond the scholarships may be appropriated to support and advance the  
27 scholarship program established pursuant to the provisions of this section. In addition to  
28 appropriation by the general assembly, charitable donations may be accepted into the scholarship  
29 program.

30 (c) The financial aid office, in conjunction with the office of enrollment management or  
31 their respective equivalent offices, at Rhode Island college and the university of Rhode Island, shall  
32 administer the scholarship program for state residents seeking graduate certificates or degrees who  
33 meet the eligibility requirements in subsection (d) of this section.

34 (d) To be eligible for receipt of the scholarship, a student:

1       (1) Shall be pursuing a pre-kindergarten through grade twelve (Pre-K-12) teacher  
2 certification as part of the teacher preparation program in the Feinstein school of education and  
3 human development (FSEHD) at Rhode Island college or the school of education at the university  
4 of Rhode Island;

5       (2) Shall commit to work full-time as a teacher within one year of graduation at a public  
6 urban core or urban ring school in Rhode Island. The commitment to work full-time shall extend  
7 to one year of teaching for each year the recipient received and accepted an award of scholarship  
8 pursuant to the provisions of this chapter;

9       (3) Shall qualify for in-state tuition and fees pursuant to the residency policy adopted by  
10 the council on postsecondary education, as amended, supplemented, restated, or otherwise modified  
11 from time to time ("residency policy");

12       (4) Shall be admitted to, and must enroll and attend Rhode Island college or the university  
13 of Rhode Island;

14       (5) Shall complete the FAFSA and any required FAFSA verification or the Rhode Island  
15 alternative application for state postsecondary student financial assistance by the deadline  
16 prescribed by Rhode Island college and/or the university of Rhode Island for each year in which  
17 the student seeks to receive funding under the scholarship program by deadline prescribed by  
18 Rhode Island college and/or the university of Rhode Island;

19       (6) Shall maintain an average annual cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 or  
20 greater, as determined by Rhode Island college or the university of Rhode Island;

21       (7) Shall remain on track to graduate on time as determined by Rhode Island college or the  
22 university of Rhode Island; and

23       (8) Shall commit to repayment of all funds received by the scholarship program if the  
24 recipient student fails to complete or comply with all requirements and provisions of this chapter.

25       (d) Rhode Island college and the university of Rhode Island shall develop a policy and  
26 procedure to secure the commitments from recipient students.

27       (e) Every scholarship awarded pursuant to the provisions of this section shall be calculated  
28 annually. Each applicant and/or recipient shall complete the FAFSA and any required FAFSA  
29 verification by the deadline prescribed by Rhode Island college or the university of Rhode Island  
30 for each year of attendance. The scholarship award shall cover the annual cost of mandatory fees  
31 and tuition, less federal and all other financial aid monies available to the recipient student. Once  
32 awarded, the scholarship may continue for a period of up to two (2) years conditioned on the  
33 recipient student's compliance with the provisions of this section.

34       (f) All scholarships awarded pursuant to the provisions of this section are subject to

1 appropriation, and no applicant shall have a right to receive any scholarship pursuant to the  
2 provisions of this section until awarded.

3 **16-112-5. Scholarship award preference.**

4 In selecting students as recipients of the scholarship established pursuant to § 16-112-4,  
5 preference shall be given to the following applicants:

6 (1) Multilingual adults with bachelor degrees from the United States and abroad; and

7 (2) Multilingual undergraduate students enrolled in teacher education programs.

8 **16-112-6. Promulgation of rules and procedure.**

9 The department of elementary and secondary education is authorized to promulgate rules  
10 and regulations to effectuate the purpose of this chapter. In addition, Rhode Island college and the  
11 university of Rhode Island shall establish appeal procedures for the award, denial, repayment, or  
12 revocation of a scholarship award pursuant to the provisions of § 16-112-4.

13 SECTION 3. This act shall take effect on July 1, 2023.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
A N A C T  
RELATING TO EDUCATION -- MULTILINGUAL EDUCATORS INVESTMENT ACT

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1           This act would authorize the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to  
2 establish a program to expand the issuance of teaching certificates to bilingual dual language and  
3 world language teachers in urban and urban ring schools; would establish a scholarship program to  
4 promote and increase the number of bilingual dual language and world language teachers in urban  
5 and urban ring schools; and would establish the scholarship eligibility requirements and  
6 preferences.

7           This act would take effect on July 1, 2023.

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